1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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closely paralleling that of their Hindu neighbors. On the other hand, their social organization is relatively lacking in the cleavages of caste which are so prevalent all about them. Apart from the village, which is usually composed of a number of patrilineal kin-groups, territorial organization is weakly developed, and the tribe as a whole has never been politically unified so far as historical records indicate.

Even as a unique people the Santal merit special attention. Numbering today over three million, the region they occupy contains the richest deposits of iron, coal and other crucial industrial minerals in all of India. The chief source of their livelihood, at least since the nineteenth century, has been settled agriculture. Prior to the nineteenth century, hunting was also an important livelihood activity, but the great increase in the region's population and subsequent reduction of forest areas has made game extremely scarce; it is now difficult for the inhabitants even to obtain materials for fuel and building purposes. Though the chief source of food and cash is the annual rice crop, a few vegetables are also grown and some fruit trees maintained. Some villages are near enough to a river for fish to be readily obtained, while some villages stock their local ponds. Even prior to the introduction of modern industry in the region, the Santal had ceased to be economically independent. Although they once did some pottery making, weaving, and even iron smelting, they have come to rely almost exclusively on various local Hindu castes for these material products. Women from several low Hindu castes are used frequently as midwives. While almost no Santal are ritually served by Brahmin priests, itinerant Hindu holy men (*sadhu*) visit many Santal villages, consulting horoscopes and offering prayers for a fee or donation.

Most Santal are still agriculturists, but some have turned to

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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63
184 variation and specialization do exist even though there are few sharp boundary lines. There is one regular social event
• 224 which reflects and intensifies regional cultural and social inter-
628 connection; this event is an annual hunt followed by a large all-male gathering outside some village where performances largely humorous and/or "obscene" (in their eyes as well as mine) take place. The participants consist of teams generally from several villages within a vicinity, and they compete with other similarly constituted teams for the favor of the assembled
[273] throng. Like many such gatherings, it terminates with rice beer.

In most of the territory occupied by the southern Santal, game is so scarce that the hunting aspect of this yearly event has become *pro forma.* After the hunt and its rituals, the various teams proceed in a march-dance parade through different villages as they make their way toward the final gathering place
[534] where performances will be held. Vigorous drum-beating marks
[535] the progress of their procession, and the characteristic Santal male strutting in dance is particularly pronounced. Any game
[192] that has been shot is borne aloft on pole stretchers. The entire event is known as *Sendra.*

[692] Several of my informants as well as the literature maintain that serious discussions of Santal customs and even settling of disputes that have escaped solution within the judicial units occur after the hunt. This was not the case at the one *Sendra* I attended. However this may be, the *Sendra* remains the largest and territorially the widest gathering of Santal, sometimes bringing together more than a thousand Santal living within a radius of about fifty miles.

596 Still to be considered are the intertwined components of the
592 extended and nuclear family. The term "extended family" is unfortunately one which has often been used very loosely; it

2; Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

f. Hunting.

224 The great joy of us men is the hunt. From olden times we have continually been hunting, and in however great a danger we may fall, still we do not give up hunting. And if a person will not go, we despise such people and call them women. Our ancestors have fought tigers and bears with great courage; sometimes the tigers and bears have gained the upper hand, and sometimes the men, and so it is going on until the present day.

178 203 224 793 796 In former times they used to announce the hunt by sending a branch from village to village, by stages; but since our stay in Sikhar we notify the day at the Pata (the hook-swinging festival)[6]. As there is a village priest and a priest of the outskirts in the village, there is similarly a dihri (hunt-priest) for the hunt. There is one hunt-priest for every single country. He carries the branch round at the Pata; the people of the country then ask him: In connexion with what is your branch, Sir? He then tells them the name of the forest: In such and such a forest, on such and such a day, at such and such a place we shall meet. He also tells them where they will spend the night. When we come home, we men in the village tell each other the news, saying: At such and such a date they are 224 to hunt through such and such a forest or over such and such a hill. The men of the village then get their different hunting implements together, they string their bows, fix the iron arrow-heads and the blunt arrow-heads in the arrows, they grind the iron arrow-heads and make them sharp-pointed, they grind their battle-axes sharp and give them a handle; they put the spear-heads on the shafts, and the swords they polish bright. They tell the women to prepare dough-balls of Mahua for food, and they make them pound rice to have to take along with them. The village headman has to give five half-seers of rice and one small bundle of Mahua as hunt-bounty. This the hunting men eat, or if some [782] poor men have nothing, they let them have a sufficiency of this. The village priest sacrifices five fowls for the sake of the hunt.

[534] When the fixed day is reached, a couple of men go at cock-crow in advance out to an open plain to bring the whole male village population together there; they also take kettle-drums and flutes and horns along with them; and until the village men have all come out, they beat the kettle-drums rat-a-tat, blow the flute harmoniously, and blow the horns tootingly, and they sing any amount of forest songs sweetly. When they have all assembled, they shout with one voice together; thereupon they go to the place where they are to meet. Here they eat their noon meal. One after the other the people of the country come and assemble there; the hunt-priest has been there from cock-crow.

224 787 Until the people of the country arrive, the hunt-priest makes a divination about good or bad happenings. If he gets anything bad in any direction, he calls the country people

[6] The Pata should be held on the last day of Cet, about the 15th of April; among the people living in the Santal Parganas it may be held any day during Bejeak (middle of April to middle of May). The dihri has a tal-branch with as many leaves as there are days remaining before the hunt is to take place.

2; Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

224 787

together and summons the people of that locality. He asks them: From what villages of such and such a locality have you come? They then one after the other mention their villages to him. Thereupon he makes divination in oil for these different villages. If he gets proof for any village that a tiger will eat them, he tells them this. He says to them: Do make your arrangements, or go home. They answer him: Please, Sir, you make arrangements for us.

224 782

The hunt-priest then selects the men the tiger will eat. He removes the occult influence in their name by offering a fowl. At this time he makes an invocation: Be greeted then, thou Day-spirit of the heaven, thou art spread like a mat, thou art covered up like a kiṛ[1], the four parts, the four worlds thou hast covered; now then a widow, a woman of ill omen has decreed, has ordained a death; she who has destined for destruction, has shut up for dying, may a tiger eat her eldest son. And these men who have been destined for destruction, have been shut up for dying, guide them out, follow them out from my forest, Father my Thakur.

Thereupon the hunt-priest sacrifices five fowls, one fowl he sacrifices to the hunt-priest bongas and four fowls to the bongas of the forest. After this he pricks himself and lets the blood run down on some rice, and this rice he offers to the bongas of the forest. He then cooks the flesh of the fowls together with rice. As many villages there are from which fowls have come, for all these he divides the hash, that is to say, of the sacrificed five fowls. Of the remaining fowls the hunt-priest sacrifices some in any place, where there may be a hindrance in the forest, making the country people stop and stand there. The hunt-priest will not let the country people pass along until he has made a sacrifice, in a place where there is a hindrance.

224

After all the men have had food, the hunt-priest tells them where water is to be found. But he himself does not eat until blood has been shed; only when the country people have shot an animal with an arrow and caused blood to drop, then only he may take food. When the hunt-priest performs a sacrifice they hobble him with a rope made of the off-stripped saplings of the Sal-tree, and with a hat of leaves they cover him from the top of his head to his eyes and blindfold him. The country people treat the hunt-priest in this way, in order that the animals may not see and not be able to run away. When the hunt-priest has finished the sacrifice, he rolls himself on the ground, and a couple of men press him down, and some of them pretend to cut him with a battle-axe with leaves. At this time they say: The forequarter, fellows, the forequarter, fellows! A big buffalo has fallen! Then he is loosened. In every place where the hunt-priest performs a sacrifice, they handle him in the same way. If, even after they have sacrificed in this way, tigers or bears eat any of the country-people, they scold him awfully; they brandish battle-axes and

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[1] Pandanus odoratissimus, WEM.

[illegible] – Bodding.

2; Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

• 224

sticks against him and say: Cut him, fellows, kick him, fellows! he has enticed us here to let the people of the country-side be eaten. And the hunt-priest puts his tail between his legs, what can he say, poor fellow?

After he has performed the sacrifices and they have had food, the crowd enters the forest, led by the hunt-priest. Some men go quietly in advance without drumming the kettle-drum, to lie in wait, and some men also hunt quietly along up to the end of the forest; and they lie in wait at the end of the forest, in order that, when the country people host reach there, the animals may not run across to some other forest or to the open plain. Having entered the forest the host spreads itself over the whole, in a line, on both sides; they keep each one kettle-drum, and in the middle they leave some place as they go along. The drummers make a tremendous noise, and the host passes along peeping everywhere.

When they hit upon a hare, a peafowl, or any kind of bird, they shout, mentioning the name of the animal or bird, and when they hit upon a big animal, they shout, mentioning the name of their village. If they kill animals, the people of the country-side cut off for themselves the forequarter and the neck-part. If it is a big animal, they cut off one foreleg with the shoulder, and the neck-part they cut into pieces. The men who are together there divide the meat of the forequarter and neck-part between themselves, and of the neck-part meat they cut off about four fingers' breadth and give to the hunt-priest. Of hares, peafowls, and birds they cut off only one leg of each, that is to say one foreleg of each animal. Of these the hunt-priest gets nothing.

If any one hits a deer with his arrow, they put down a leaf and press it down with a stone there on the foot-mark of the deer, and continuing to shout they follow the tracks assiduously, until the deer falls down. When the deer has fallen, the men who are there cut off the forequarter and the neck-part, after having investigated the case. The forequarter, in which there is the mark of the arrow, they do not cut off. If a man only hits an animal with his arrow, and some other man shoots and kills the animal, then the man who shot and killed the animal gets the forequarter part for killing, and the man who first hit it gets the deer. Also in this case the people of the country-side get a forequarter and a neck-part.

When the men catch sight of tigers or bears, they inform each other loudly, and if they bite anyone in passing, then a drummer who is near by, will drum the alarm three times; then the people of the country-side on the right and left side know that a calamity has happened; therefore they who are near come together running. They apply medicine to the man bitten. Then they hunt along. Now and then when they meet bears, and on account of the multitude of people there are unable to shoot them, they beat them with sticks, so that they fall down. Sometimes they kill them, and sometimes, when a bear is unable to stand any more, he will get up and run away howling right through the people. When they beat bears, these sometimes forcibly take the stick. When a tiger bites people, mostly

2; Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

brothers and intimate friends will, risking their life, try to rescue each other; they will either rescue the man, or they will all let themselves be eaten. Nowadays people have become very cowardly; as soon as they hear the word "a tiger, a tiger", they run away, with their loin-strip hanging down in their hand. 224 •

When it becomes evening, they come out from the forest and go to the place where they are to spend the night. When they have come together, the men of every individual village collect in one place the Mahua-dough or the flour, and sharing this among themselves they eat. We have a story about this. Formerly once, it is told, a poor man had brought with him some fig-dough, because he had no food. At the place where they spent the night, the people of his village, seeing this, did not mix what he had in with theirs; they said: What have you brought? eat what you have yourself, as best you can. And so, poor fellow, he stayed on there eating just this. Next day he shot a Nilgae. Then instead of shouting the name of his village, he shouted "Fig". The men of his village came near and said: It is our deer, fellows! So and so has killed it. The people of the country-side asked this poor man: Why did you shout in such a way? He then told his grief before the country people, saying: When yesterday evening the dough was divided they kept me outside. When they heard this, the country people scolded them a good deal, and the men of the village became humble. They fined them severely through the people of the country-side. From that time up to the present day we do not act in such a way. 224 262

When they have eaten the dough, they commence to prepare rice and curry. The camp fires look like a burning forest, such hosts have assembled. They who cook the rice do this, and some men singe the hares and peafowls; the stomachs and legs they make into curry. Felled deer remain as they are. When they have had their evening meal, the hunt-priest calls out that they are to have their council meeting. Thereupon five or six men from every village go to the meeting, and others blow the flute and sing forest songs; they are highly lascivious; some lie down to sleep. The young men from the village of the hunt-priest wander from camp to camp, singing and begging (as at the Dasãe festival), and the men of the camp each give them a handful of rice, and they on their side make all kinds of fun, and make people laugh. 224 793

The hunt-priest is the headman of the hunt-council, and the people of the country-side are his tenants. Where he sits down to have the council, there the hosts gather, and sitting round there they keep him in the middle, as when there is a halo round the sun. Leading men sit down near him. The hunt-priest now asks the people of the country-side: Do, Sirs, men of the land, if any of you has any distress or grief or any unsettled quarrel, let us hear. Are we all well or not? The men of the land then answer him: So far as mind and body are concerned, we are well by your blessing. The hunt-priest then answers: By the blessing of Thakur we shall get what is good.

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Now, one by one, they tell their grievances before the hunt-priest. One man says: With such and such, and such and such villages we have got into a dispute over a hare. The hunt-priest then asks them: In what way? The man then says: I threw it down with a stick. Another man says: My dog caught it. The hunt-priest then asks both of them: Have you any witnesses? They both answer him: We have, men from such and such, and such and such villages. The hunt-priest then sends for the witnesses; when they come, he questions them, one after the other, on both sides. He who is proved to be the first, he will get it. The men of the land assist the hunt-priest in judging; but the hunt-priest gives the order. If the two have no witnesses, or if, because of cupidity, the witnesses muddle the matter, the hunt-priest will next morning, when the sun is rising, plant an arrow, belonging to each of the two litigants, in the ground. He applies sindur to both arrows, and having a loṭa with water in his hand he stands and says: O Father Ṭhakur of heaven, by thy grace we judged, the two did not obey; thou art there, filling the heaven, o Ṭhakur Father, and we also, as is seen, sitting here filling the earth, we have judged; as this judgement did not stand, we so many men of the land, are not to be blamed, now then, thou knowest the matter of these two, judge thou between them! The hunt-priest and the men of the country then say to the two litigants: Do bow to the Day-spirit and take up these arrows of yours, we, so many men, are free from responsibility. Do, each of you, take yours, do not fear us, fear Ṭhakur. They thereupon make the one who takes up his arrow say: Have a care then, O Ṭhakur, if I am acting unrighteously, may a tiger eat me in this forest of the hunt, and if I am not acting unrighteously, I shall return home safe and sound. If the other man also has the courage, he will do the same, otherwise he will withdraw. The hunt-priest then at once pours the water in the loṭa out where the arrow had been put in the ground. When he has done this, he bows to it and says: Do, O Ṭhakur, judge thou between them, what is good or bad. Thereupon during the hunt that day they make them, if they have both sworn, both stay together, and in the middle of the forest a tiger will come out roaring, and he will come running straight for these two, and he will first stand with his forelegs on the man who has spoken the truth, but will not do him any harm; thereupon he will leave him and make an utter end of the unrighteous one. This we have many of us seen with our own eyes. If he is saved from a tiger, he will surely die by some other calamity.

At the night-council of the hunt the hunt-priest and the men of the country together dispose of disputes in connexion with killed animals, one after the other, if there are witnesses; and if not, they next morning make the disputing men swear, just as I have told. When they have settled the disputes in connexion with killed animals, the hunt-priest says: Well, Sirs, men of the country, if you have any other disputes, tell it. Then everybody, one after the other, tell their grievances. One man says: As for me, the village headman and council have without any cause fined me; or: The Pargana and the headmen of five

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villages have passed an unrighteous judgement in connexion with some riceland, or in connexion with a bride and bridegroom; or: Me they have without any cause called a witch[8]; or: I have on account of this or that in the meantime forbidden so and so people to fetch water and touch the drinking vessels; or: As for me, the village people have without any cause or reason shut my door, — they make a thousand complaints, because the hunt-council is our High Court. There the Pargana, Des Mañjhi, and village headmen have no power to intimidate any one, the men of the country, small and big, judge, and there they utterly subdue the greedy, fat people, if they have in any case acted unjustly. Some greedy people do not go there at all out of shame or fear. If they have not gone there, the men of the country will next day seize them, and if they do not obey, the men of the country will next day go in crowds to their home, and if they find proofs of their injustice, they punish them so as to make them flinch. At the hunt judging they judge very righteously; they do not let any injustice pass at all. In the village the headman or the Pargana scold and intimidate us, as they take us to be of no account; but at the burnt forest they have no power to silence us; then they become slinking like the tail of a cowardly dog; for this reason we poor people have great trust in the judgement of the burnt forest[9].

Continuing to judge, dancing the duñger, singing forest songs, and blowing the flute they continue until dawn. They then prepare their morning meal and eat; thereupon the hunt-priest sacrifices the remaining fowls. Now they enter the other forest and turn back hunting. When, at noon or in the middle of the afternoon, they have finished hunting they disperse. Thereupon they start for their various villages, hunting as they pass along.

Formerly they were hunting up to five days, being continually out so long; but nowadays, what can be done, when there is no such big forest? Formerly when the hunters entered and passed through the street of any village, the girls of the village washed their feet, and the hunters gave these girls campa flowers[10], and they saluted each other. Thereupon the village people gave the hunters Mahua dough and water to eat and drink. Nowadays this custom of ours has been discontinued.

When the hunters come home, the respective household people wash their feet, and they salute each other, because they have come back saved from death; as they say among us: The danger for women is at childbirth; the danger for men is during hunt and chase; if you get through this, you will see ages. When they have washed their feet, they give them food. They eat; thereupon the hunters go to where there is water; here they gather, and when they have come together, they singe and cut up the killed animals. The one

[8] i. e., his wife or a daughter or a related woman living in his house; a man is not a witch. [9] The hunt-council is constantly referred to as "the burnt forest". Every year the Santals in the beginning of April set fire to the undergrowth and especially all the dead leaves lying on the ground. [10] Either a small bush, Ochna squarrosa, Roxb., or a large tree, Michelia champaca, L.

224 [793] [622] who shot the deer, him they give the hind half; and of the head they give him one split piece, of the spleen one split piece and of the liver one split piece. To the village priest they give the flesh on both sides of the backbone and a part of the liver, to offer to the spirits. For the village headman they take out one thigh as his part of the rump belonging to the killer, the village headman gets the upper part of this; what is below this his deputy gets, and the end of the leg the Godet gets. And the kettle-drum drummer gets for himself a separate part of this. The remaining flesh the hunters divide equally among themselves, and for the men who did not go to hunt, they leave a little flesh, and this they apportion to them, house by house; this portion they call an extra share (eapo jore). Of hares and peafowls the village priest has no right to get anything, neither has the village headman any right, nor have they any right to get an extra portion; of these only the one who shot gets his share, and the remaining flesh the hunters divide in equal portions among themselves. They who carry get the belly, of deer and of hares. This they call the belly for carrying. Of all kinds of birds the carriers get the gizzard.

[793] [622]

The village priest wraps the flesh he is to offer up in a dry leaf and roasts it and offers it to The Five the Six, Pargana haram, Mañjhi haram, and Marsê buru; having offered it he eats the flesh.

The village headman has, by customary law, to give five half-seers of rice as a hunt bounty; this the hunters cook together with the flesh of the heads into a hash and eat. Thereupon they come to their respective homes with their portions. The shooter's rightful portion and the village headman's portion they carry along; the headman's portion they bring into his house, and the rightful portion of the killer of an animal into his house. They who carry and bring this, get beer and food at both places. In the house of the shooter they separate from his rightful portion the pot-flesh on the underside of the knee. This the sisters and daughters of the shooter get. However far away they may live, the shooter brings this to them and leaves it there, and these treat him to beer and food, and they look upon this as a great honour. His part of the head and the liver the shooter cooks with rice into a hash and offers this to the ancestors of his family.

[769]

g. Composing songs and the like.

538 Parables they have gradually composed, at different occasions. Taking up what has been seen they have composed these. If a person suddenly speaks and reveals this or that, then others, thinking that this is good and fitting, will also speak the same, and thus it is spread about. Folk-tales and fairy-stories are not composed nowadays, only old ones are in vogue, learnt one after the other. Riddles we have also only old ones. To mimic no 536 one is able to learn, only by having a natural ability people are able to mimic, to show the faults of people. The songs are mostly old ones; still they are now and then com- 533 posing a few new ones. Men have composed riñj, matwar, and marriage songs, and

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
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735 sorrows. It is a pathetic sight to see young Santals
293 keep sober till they marry, and then grow old sud-
154 denly as cares and anxieties of life come to them,
when they plunge headlong in a sodden life.

181 The rigours of their life on the earth are some-
what overcome by the objects of material culture
we have noted in the foregoing pages. But one
can easily see that they are crude devices of a primi-
tive world, not serving their purpose well in the
[171] twentieth century. But, one must however notice
that the level of culture presented by the Santal is
on a par with that of the rest of the hill tribes of
what may be called the Central Belt of India, which
is a homogeneous culture-area in all important res-
pects.

Conclusion

174 As we conclude the review of Santal economic
181 life, we find that the actual stage reached by the
224 tribe in its material culture is still primitive. Their
24 traditions make it clear that there was a time in the
433 life of the Santals when they lived a semi-hunting
nomadic life, perpetually moving in quest of food.
But the picture we have got in the foregoing pages
reveals a people who have finally accepted the life of
settled agriculturists.

177 As, however, we look closely to the objects of
Santal material culture, we notice similarities with

St Mukherjea O. Y-4, 8 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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Supreme Court of the Santals

224 634 692 [196] According to immemorial custom, the Santals join together in an annual hunt (*Lò bir sendra*) on the conclusion of the spring flower-festival, when opportunity is taken to discuss various questions affecting the social and religious problems of the tribe, and to decide the reference cases from the decisions of the *Desh-Pròdhans*.

Here grave social offences necessitating social excommunication and ostracism (*Bitlàbà*), (as we shall see in detail very soon) constitute subjects of grave deliberation by the tribe. Such meetings are [211] [184] [202] convened by the circulation of a mysterious notice by means of a knot tied to a rope as in Mayurbhanj, or a branch of *Sal* tree carried from *hat* (market) to *hat* (as in Santal Parganas). About the constitution [114] of this privy-council, Dr. Campbell opines that a person, *Dihri* (the superintendent of the hunt), is also the president of the court which assembles in the evening, but all that our enquiries revealed in Mayurbhanj was that the Pargana, the Desh-Pròdhans of the tribe assisted by the elders called Desh-Panchayet, jointly deliberate together before declaring their verdict.

[184] [178] This ancient institution, called in Santal lore *Sendra bir bichar* (a trial during a hunt at a forest) is almost extinct in Mayurbhanj, as wild games are protected by the State and no question of a tribal hunt

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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arises ; and those days are no more when it was a regular feature of Santal life with the mass dancing and drinking associated with its conclusion. So it is that the Santals of Mayurbhanj have got a second string to their bow, in the form of a parliament during *Sakrat baske*, (*Mòkòrbasi*, on the second of Magh) in case the hunting assembly may not be convened for want of sufficient attraction.

Supreme council at Mòkòrbasi

This parliament of the *Desh-Pròdhans* is held at some halting place (*gadi* or *mukam*) towards the river Damodar to which the Santals journey to throw the bones of their dead relations in the holy river. Here it is that the people aggrieved by the decision of the *Desh-Pròdhans* appeal to the assembly of elders to reopen their cases and try them according to law. Frequently, these appeals are admitted and tried by the assembly of all the *Desh-Pròdhans* of the tribe in consultation with the elders. But here also only important questions relating to the payment of bride-price or restriction of conjugal rights form the subject-matter of the decisions of the supreme court.

Social taboos: Punishment for their breaches

While dealing with the village assembly and its powers and functions, we have observed that as

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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decided. The penalty for non-observance of this law is that they would be socially ostracised themselves. 684 622 692

The venue of the final trial rests on the tribal chiefs and various other officials of the tribe who assemble together during their general hunting season in the month of Santal *Pata Cando* (swinging festival known as Còròk) At this big Santal assembly, the case is reopened and the parties are asked to adduce evidence in support of their case. If, however, the accused pleads guilty, there is an end of the matter, and he or she, as the case may be, is fined or ostracised. If the fine is not paid within the date fixed, ostracism takes place in lieu of fine. [623] [224] [796]

When the parties are found guilty by the assembly, the Headman, who took cognisance of the offence initially, gets his credit, but if the evidence shows that the accused persons are not guilty, he is himself seriously punished.

When a verdict of guilt is passed, a general decree of excommunication is issued and a date is fixed for the ceremony. The date and place of *Bitlahà* is communicated through the entire tribe by means of a branch of a *Sal*-tree conveyed on the shoulders of a Santal from one village to another, from one market-place to another; outside their pale few know the significance of this mysterious notice. 684 [202] [211]

Bi Mukherjee O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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MAYURBHANJ

This interesting flower-festival is celebrated in Mayurbhanj under the name of "*Salui puja*", which also means a '*sal*-blossom festival'. But during our investigations, we observed certain differences from the customs of the Santal Parganas, we have noted just now.

In the first place, the *Godet* does not take three fowls to the priest on the evening of the first day at Mayurbhanj, but, we understand, the latter keeps them tied in his own house. Secondly, as regards the actor-deities, the Mayurbhanj Santals impersonate five of them and not three as in the Santal Parganas. The two additional ones are Maraṅ Mañjhi Haṛam and Hudiñ Mañjhi Haṛam. Thirdly, on the conclusion of the second day, the festival is not carried on to a third. But a general hunt called *Baba Baske Sendra* is arranged, when a leg of the animals hunted, is presented to the Headman, who in turn supplies a pot of *hàndia* (rice-beer) to the hunters. Should no game be shot, the tribe will not rest content, for, they must kill a fowl even by force from the priest's house and make the ceremonial present to the Headman. At night, the tribe assemble near the priest's house, and unloose the string of the bow carried to the Holy Grove. The function concludes with a general drink of rice-beer at the priest's expense.

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APPENDIX II

A NOTE ON HUNTING IN MAYURBHANJ

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An account of a branch of the Pre-Dravidians will remain sadly incomplete without a note on Hunting, the foremost vocation of an once semi-hunting migratory tribe, connected as it was with the quest of food. It is perhaps an intriguing commentary on the march of times and fast-changing ideals that it was revealed from the statement of a Mayurbhanj Santal that hunting takes the second place in the tribal life as women do not accompany it. Nevertheless, it continues to be acknowledged as one of the earliest of Santal institutions and one percent of men may only refuse to go to the hunts.

Kinds of hunting

The various kinds of hunting existing amongst the Santals are:—(1) *Bethi Sendra*, hunting by the order of the State, joined by all. (2) *Deshua Sendra*, a mixed hunt of the aboriginals under the auspices of the State. (3) *Baba Baske Sendra* or *Akhan Sendra*. (4) *Iarpa Sendra*, a hunt comprising some ten mouzas. (5) *Por Sendra*, an informal one day's hunt for the relaxation of the village.

Bethi Sendra

The date of this hunt is fixed by the Maharaja, generally in the month of Chaitra or Baisakh. It

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224 was a regular feature in old times but now it is organised more or less for the relaxation of state guests or when a wild animal troubles the people.

Deshua Sendra (Disom Gipitic' Sendra)[1].

[634] The date of this annual hunt is fixed by the Parganas of the hilly areas where the tribal excursion is made in the month of *Chaitra* or *Baisakh* (April—May). The information is sent round by means of a knotted string called *Girà gath* conveyed by the Santals.

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The *modus operandi* of this information may be thus explained. Supposing a string with fifteen knots reaches the village X, the villagers will unloose a knot. When it reaches the village Y, it means that fourteen days remain for the hunt taking place. The messenger carrying the notice is changed there and another takes his place. It is his duty to inform the place of *Gipitic'*, e.g. where the tribe would rest after the hunt.

224 782 [634] [793] The preliminaries regarding which portions of the jungle would be beaten by the people of particular *mouzas* (areas) being fixed by the Parganas in consultation with the tribe, the *Dibri* of the area offers pujas to the presiding deity of the hill.

[178] [519] [211] 1 This hunt has been stopped since 1916 when a mêlée took place in Mayurbhanj, so the information sent round by a string full of knots cannot now be legally circulated.

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offers pujas to the presiding deity of the hill. Vermilion and red fowls are offered to the gods together with sun-dried rice and incense. As the fowls are sacrificed, the blood is poured on the sun-dried rice and offered to the other gods of the locality in their names. The head of the fowl lies on the ground and the body is kept for the meal of the *Dihri*. Next the *Dihri* salutes the deity by prostrating himself fully on the ground and thus invokes him:—

> We are hunting in this jungle.
> Let the hunting be safe.
> Let us hunt in plenty.
> Let not lions and tigers kill us.
> Let no serpent bite us.

Now the news is conveyed by blowing a horn called *Sakwa* made of the horn of a *Gayal* (a species of ox, *Bos frontalis*). All men begin beating the jungle. The hunting goes on as musical instruments like the *Nagera*, *dhak*, *dhor* (small drum), *jharli* (a bell), cymbal are played upon by a band of musicians. The *Nagera* sounds "dubuń, dubuń, dubuń" but when the animals approach with a swift motion, it is changed to "dhibi, dhibi, dhibi." All men become aware of the advancing games. Starting approximately at 10 A.M., the hunt continues upto sunset, with bows and arrows, *tangis*, swords, *kapi* and *borolam* as weapons.

3: Mukherjea O, Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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Gipitic'

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When the hunt is finished, all the Santals assembled repair to the Gipitic', the place fixed for spending the night after the excursion is over. The Parganas sit together and decide disputes regarding the ownership of hunted games which are heaped under the shades of trees occupied by the villagers of particular localities.

Let us take up a concrete case to illustrate the rules regarding the decision of such claims. Suppose an animal was first shot by X of a village A. Thereafter, it was again shot at by the villagers of B and again by C. The judges, in such a case, would award the *mandal* (the hind part of an animal) of the right leg together with the head of the animal, the liver and lungs (*imbòrò*) to X. It is customary for the man thus allowed his first share to offer the *imbòrò* (liver and lungs) to the Chief presiding deity, Maraṅ Buru, and Hapṛamko and share the meal with the members of his clan. Should B, who had the second shot, belong to village A, he will not get any special share. But if the fact be otherwise, he will get five ribs of the right front side. Similarly, C will not be allowed a share should he be an inhabitant of A but will receive the meat measuring three fingers of the entire neck of the hunted animal. The Parganas, who decide these cases have a special knack of identifying the man by whose arrow the animal was

B Mukherjea O. T-4.5 (n.s. 1933-1939) 1962
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shot. They also take evidence as regards the first, second and third shots.

The rest of the meat is taken by the villagers of the man who had the first shot and shared among themselves. It is worthy of note that even the hunting dogs employed in the chase receive their shares equally with men. Generally, the meat that goes to X's share is carried by his villagers home. The head of the game shot is divided into two parts, the first going to X, the other to the villagers of X. The Headman of X's village gets the left hind leg (*donde*). This is also conveyed home by the villagers, who, in return, receive a pot of rice-beer, twelve seers of rice, five pieces of turmeric and some salt. It is customary for the men thus presented to cook a hotch-poteh with the head of the hunted animal previously received for a common meal. [231]

In case an animal like a *Gayal* or *Sambar* (a species of deer like an elk) is hunted by, say ten or twelve men, custom lays it down that the first five hunters will only receive their shares.

It should be noted that if X's wife is pregnant, he will not get the head of the animal and it will go to the villagers to be shared by them. The *Dihri* gets a share of meat per each mouza of men who hunted the animals. [843] [193]

Another important feature deserves mention. It may be that in a *Deshua Sendra* there may be any 224 782

Jt Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ed. 1933-1939) 1902
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224 782 trouble or games may not be at all available. Should such misfortunes befall the tribe, a *Jhumpar* takes place in which the village deities and *Buru Boṅga* are invoked and represented by the hunters. Sal-
[824] leaves are woven to represent winnowing-fans. Leaves of *meral* (A small tree, *Phyllanthus Emblica*, Linn.) are substituted for sun-dried rice and rubbed on the
224 782 winnowing-fan. Three men fall in a hypnotic trance and impersonate Maraṅ Buru, Jahèrera and Mòṅṛèn-
789 ko. The fourth, Buru Boṅga, remains at a distance. These gods are asked for the reasons of the calamities, invoked to suggest remedies to get rid of the trouble, whereupon, the appropriate answers are received.

224 The night of the Gipitic' is spent by the Santals with a great deal of mirth and hilarity. Music, dance and feasts go on till sun-rise. The songs sung on the occasion are called Bir seren and several of them have been quoted in the appendix on sex-life. It will appear therefrom that they are of an erotic nature and we gathered that the prevailing atmosphere becomes too much to be stood by the women who assemble to sell rice-beer and they fly from the
[535] spot. Men dance the *Doṅger*, a dance meant for men only.

224 789 *Customs and Beliefs connected with Hunting*

While out for hunting, if the Santals see a pitcher full of water within the boundary of the village,

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or a man returning after washing clothes or a mongoose—all these are considered good omens auguring success in their excursion. On the contrary, bad omens are considered to be the sight of empty pitchers, men defecating, signs at which the Santals would give up the journey. 224 787

When men leave for the hunts (women never accompany them), the women of the house do not comb their hair, rub oil thereon, wash their clothes, or apply cow-dung on the floor. They believe that if they do so, evil may befall the hunters who being *putur jil* (flesh without the protection of hair like animals), as distinct from animals who have the natural protection of hair, are more liable to fall victims to wild animals like tigers and lions. 224 784

When the men are out hunting, the women spend an anxious time at home. Should a bird called "Pio" (Oriya *Peko*, Golden Oriole) come near a house and cry to the tune of "Peo cha-r...Peo-char-r-r," the women or the other members of the household left behind, will take it as a bad omen prognosticating that a serious misfortune has befallen the hunter who has joined the hunt from the house. 224 787

A ceremony for the welfare of the hunters is observed by the Santals when they assemble together and have a *jhumpar*. A suitable offering is promised to the deity Buru Boṅga and the village deities. 224 782

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224 782 In the alternative, the hunters may simply ask the Headman to invoke the Hill-god to look to the welfare of the tribe during the hunt.

224 834 784 As regards special rules to be observed before the hunting, it may be noted that men who will hunt, sleep separately from their wives and do not have sexual intercourse on the night previous to the hunting. On the day fixed for the excursion, the hunters do not apply oil on their heads or eat meat or fish or come in contact with women who have menstruated whose very touch is thought to defile the food or the clothes of the hunters.

224 [515] When the hunting party returns to the village, the feet of the hunters are washed with great delight by the women and oil is rubbed on the tired legs. All these conclude with the customary [576] salutations called *Johor* and *do god*, the former being adopted by women who are superiors in age and relationship and the latter, being a prostration by the juniors.

224 593 533 539 We would like to conclude this short review with a folk-song which describes the agony of a Santal wife while her husband is out hunting:

Baba hak najòmcò.
Baba sòbòd na jòmcò.
Baba lota dak' dògo sepeindaramlet.
Bàhu nalòmraga, bàhu nalòmhòmòra,
Bàhu hòpòn badal go bàhu hòpòn menak'ko.

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Baba heo haracò, baba hòbòr haracò,
Baba nunko tuluc' dògò baba nohoiñ reben len.

(TRANSLATED)

Daughter-in-law: Father, the sound of (returning from the hunt) perhaps I hear.
Father, the sound I hear perhaps.
Father, I am standing at the front-door with a pot of water by placing it on the palm.

Father-in-law: My daughter, don't you weep. Do not mourn (my girl).
My daughter, I have got a son, your husband will be changed for another of my son.

Daughter-in-law: Father, I have reared him on my lap,
Father, I have embraced him, while (he was) a child.
Father, I am not ready to accept him.

OTHER HUNTS

224 [431]

The *Babahaske Sendra* follows the method of the *Deshua Sendra* but there is no *Gipitic'*. A specialty is that the Headman is presented with a *kulai* (hare) or *tur* (squirrel), who, in return presents a pot of rice-beer. The *Jarpa Sendra* is a hunt on a smaller scale by members of five or six mouzas.

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No information is sent by a knot of strings (*gira gath*), it is conveyed orally. *Por Sendra* is purely a relaxation at pleasure during the mouth of *Chaitra* or *Baisakh*.

APPENDIX III

Pàris.

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(A Note on Santal clans and sub-clans by Dr. Campbell.)

"The Santals are divided into eleven septs, but originally, it is said, there were twelve, one of which has been lost. Each sept is subdivided into sub-septs of which according to the popular belief among Santals there are twelve. In fact, however, the sub-septs of each sept vary in number, as the following list will show.

Sept Kisku:—

Sub-septs:—Nij Kisku, Gaṛ . . ., Ok' . . ., Obòr . . ., Màñjhi khil . . ., Nacke khil . . ., Son . . ., Aḍ . . ., Badaṛ . . ., Biṭol . . ., Sada . . ., Paṭi . . ., Jabe . . ., Tika. . and Katwa...

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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and night. As a rule they cook their food outside, but always have a fire-place inside. During the cold season they generally cook their food inside, the result being that the house specially at night, is suffocatingly full of smoke and every thing becomes covered with soot. This does not, however, seem to affect the Santals much. In the bed-room they store their rice and all other belongings, and the fowls are kept too in that room at night. It is, of course, not possible to keep such a house clean, even if they tried to do so.

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Agriculture :—The Santals before becoming agriculturists were probably in the hunting stage. Still, nothing pleases them so much as to be out for hunting, they even now observe the "Dehiri hunting", which is an annual hunt. During the time of the annual hunt the Dehiri priest performs certain ceremonies to propitiate "Sin Bonga" to avert calamity during hunting. All these suggest that prior to becoming agriculturists the Santals were in the hunting stage. At present the Santals are typical agriculturists. There is no authentic record when the Santal first started tilling the soil. Rev. Bodding in his memoir, "How the Santals live" has mentioned their first attempt at cultivation in the following words :—

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"It is just possible that one of their first attempts to get something out of the soil may have been something like what is now called 'kurau', a mode of cultivation that is said to have been used also by Santals in former years, but is not practised by them at the present time, so far as is known. It is, however, still kept up by the Paharias living on the hills of the Santal country. A piece of jungle is cut down high up

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HUNTING

Hunting:—In hunting the Santals are particularly 224 expert. Nothing pleases them so much as to be out after game with bows and arrows. As soon as they come to know that a party is out for hunting they give up their work and join the party. Hunting was one of the earliest methods of the Santals for the search of food. As except the reserved forests, the real forests [137] have mostly disappeared, so game which they get by hunting is extremely poor. Consequently they are now compelled to adopt agriculture as their main source for collecting food. Still they celebrate the annual 224 hunting (Dehri hunting) excursion of a magico-religious 796 nature. The Dehri hunting, which is the most impor- 793 tant hunting of the Santals, takes place once a year [221] in the month of Falgun (February and March). Dehri, [824] their hunting priest carries a big branch of a Sal-tree (shorea robusta) with leaves and goes to the market, where people seeing him understand the purpose of his coming. As each leaf represents a day so they count them all and go out for hunting just after the number of days as indicated by the leaves of the branch. In this hunting expedition people of distant villages take part. The Dehri is responsible for the 224 hunt, i. e. (all goes well and no mishap occurs). By 796 divination he finds out as to who are threatened by 793 any danger during the hunt, and advises them to turn 782 back but they generally make him sacrifice fowls for [787] them to Sin-Bonga to avert the impending calamity. He performs some ceremony and offers sacrifices to bongas

4; Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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[796]
[793] of the forest where the hunt is to be held, to ensure
[782] success and safety. After performance of the ceremony
[411] the whole party enters the forest with bows and
[534] arrows, Pellet bows (Gorkhas), Slings (Gaduar), Tangha (Kopi), battle axes, dogs and Tamuka (drums) and Sakuas (Blowpipe made of buffalo horn) which they beat and blow furiously all through the hunt.

In the forest they stand side by side in a long line surrounding an area. Some remain ready with their weapons behind the big trees, the drums and blowpipes of horn they beat and blow furiously. The men nearest to the game shoot their arrows at them; when the animals being frightened run hither and thither, men shoot arrows, sling stones and tanghas at them. If the game elude the arrows and other weapons shot or hurled at them, the baffled hunts-men shout out and let their dogs run after them. The men, who stand in line, then entangle the game and the hunters who followed the game come up and kill them. Once when I was at Bokrabandh and
[114] Katahaldih I saw the Santal process of catching hares and ichneuman The Santals barricade a meadow, which is just by the side of a forest, with branches of trees and bamboos, only keeping open the side which is towards the forest. They keep an opening on one side where they fix a trap. They drive the hares from the jungle towards the place which is surrounded by the branches. The hares run towards the trap and fall into it. They kill ichneuman in the following way. The inchneuman remains under the ground and some dig holes, while others remain ready with Tanghis. As soon as it comes out they strike or throw Tanghis

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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at it. They kill any animal which they see before them during the time of hunting. After the hunt the slain animals are dressed and the meat is divided among themselves in the following way. The man, who first hits an animal, has a right over it. He has to distribute a certain part to others who participate. The rest has to be distributed among the men of his own village, keeping a certain part for himself. This hunting lasts not more than two days. They kill birds with pellet bows or with bolts. Besides this Dehri hunting there are other hunting expeditions in which the people of one village go to hunt whenever they like. In Sakrat people of each village go for hunt, on the last day of the month of Poush (January) generally after their Badna festival

HUNTING IMPLEMENTS:—

1. **Arrow** :—Santal arrow consists of two parts—the hand and the shaft. The head is made of iron and is pyramidal in shape. It is broader at the base and gradually tapers towards the sharp pointed end. The basal region of the head ends in a tang which is inserted into the shaft and tied tightly by means of cocoon strips. The shaft is made of a long, cylindrical, narrow bamboo piece. At the butt end of the shaft two feathers are tied with cocoon strips. These feathers keep the balance of the arrow at the time of flight. A notch is made by cutting a little portion from one side of the posterior part of the butt end for placing it on the bow string.

Before operation, sometimes, the arrow head is poisoned to inflict a fatal wound. The Santals generally practise 'Mediterranean method' for releasing the arrow

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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171 have been always branded in Hindu scriptures as practices of the lowest order, a sort of getting power over ghosts, pisaches and bhuts. The Gita[1] calls the worshippers of the prets and bhuts as tamasic. Thus they are to be looked upon as survival of a pre-Dravidian
[174] stage of culture in Hindu Society. From the wide-
[192] spread occurrence of the word Mati it would seem that the Santals have lost their own original term and adopted a Hindi loan word as they possibly did in the case of the word for the supreme being, Thakur. The tendency to change the name can be traced amongst the Oraons due to a recent semi-Hindu and semi-aboriginal religious revival movement known as the Bhagat, comparable to the similar Kharwar movement amongst the Santals. The Mati is called Bhagat as the most dignified term for a Baisnab devotee. A change of outlook has also taken place in making the spirits no longer malevolent and the aspect of mercy and grace under Baisnab influence have been emphasised, comparable to the changing of many of the pagan gods of Europe into Roman Catholic patron saints.

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171 Hunting being one of the most absorbing occupation of all these tribes a special functionary for hunting occasions is quite natural. Amongst the Santals the Dehri still maintains his own; amongst the Birhors the Diguar or Kotowar has sunk to the position of an assistant to the priest Naya.

[539]

यजन्ते सात्त्विका देवान् यक्षरक्षांसि राजसाः ।
प्रेतान् भूतगणांश्चान्ये यजन्ते तामसा जनाः ॥

[1]Chaptar 17, Verse No. 4.

41 Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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796 782 animals is eaten by the men. The only woman who gets a share is the wife of the priest. Drinking, dancing and singing are followed by young men and women of the village.

796 614 [184] **Jom Sim:** The *Jom Sim* is performed with many quaint ceremonies which differ somewhat for the different clans. That is why it is called clan festival. Mr. Culshaw recorded some stories from which it can be ascertained how it is connected with clan. "The 614 796 539 Karwak Hasdak tell the story of how long ago their ancestors were celebrating the *Jom Sim* festival and all the Hasdak were present. They had performed the sacrifices and everyone had been served with rice and meat, but some of the younger folk present felt that they had not been given enough to eat, so they killed a buffalo, or kada, became known as Karwar Hasdak". The Soren Santal relate "that in the very early days the ancestors of the Soren were celebrating the *Jom Sim* festival and some of the company began to prepare the food and cook it. In imitation of Brahmin cooks [179] they put on sacred threads and served all the people. From that time they became known as poita Soren".[1]

796 614 174 It is probably the oldest sacrifice the Santal have because it has more aboriginal features in it than any other sacrifice of theirs.

724 793 [221] [824] [211] **Dihri Hunting:** The *Dihri* hunting, which is the most important hunting of the Santals which takes place once a year in the month of Falgun (February and March). *Dihri*, their hunting priest carries a big branch of a *Sal* tree with leaves and goes to the market, where people

[1] W.J. Culshaw—Tribal heritage. 1949. pp. 74 and 75.

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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seeing him understand the purpose of his coming. As each leaf represents a day so they count them all and go out for hunting after just the number of days as indicated by the leaves of the branch. In this hunting expedition people of distant villages take part. The *Dihri* is responsible for the hunt, i.e. (all goes well and no mishap occurs). By divination he finds out as to who are threatened by any danger during the hunt, and advises them to turn back but they generally make him sacrifice fowls for them to *Sin Bonga* to avert the impending calamity. He performs some ceremony and offers sacrifices to *bongas* of the forest where the hunt is to be held, to ensure success and safety in the following way:

The *Dihri* enters the forest and being naked, pricks his whole body except the joints, with the thorn of a bush. He then draws a small circle on the ground with powdered rice and puts some adwa rice mixed with the blood which comes out from his body and makes a vermilion mark inside the circle. The *Dihri* then gives a little rice to all the forest *bongas*. Others who are following him, then enter the forest with bows and arrows.

Mag-Sim: The Santals perform this festival in the month of Magh (January-February) when the jungle grass is mown; fowls are sacrificed to all the *bongas* by the village priest and his assistant. This festival marks the end of the Santal year. All the village officials go through the form of resigning their offices and the cultivators give up their lands. After a week the headman of the village says before all the villagers that he has changed his mind and would like to continue in the

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man, together with that of all the other officials, was renewed annually, but there is little reality in it at the present day and the post is held for life. He is the spokesman of the villagers in all matters affecting their temporal welfare. In the original settlements it was usual for two or three brothers to start the new village together. The eldest brother assumed the leading position, and all the lands cleared or claimed for the future were in his gift. The cultivable land was divided equally after some portions had been reserved for the officials in recognition of the services they would be called on to perform for the benefit of the community, and the headman received the biggest share of the reserved land. As the village grew, others came to settle. Some became the tenants of the headman, fleeing from the oppression of landlords elsewhere. Others came into the village by marrying daughters of the first settlers. So it comes about that the family of the headman is the most substantial in the village. During the course of years, however, even the headman has in the majority of cases lost his original rights to a non-Santal landlord and has himself become an under-tenant, in spite of which his family has maintained its favourable position in relation to the rest of the villagers. In some cases he has also been able to acquire the rights of other tenants who have defaulted for one reason or another in paying rent. In addition to land, the headman receives other payments which he can use for his own benefit. Thus, when an offender against tribal custom is fined the headman receives a fourth of the total amount. During the spring hunts he receives a part of the flesh of every animal slain by a man from his own village. During the marriage ceremonies he occupies an important position throughout, and when a new bride is coming to his village her father has to pay a rupee to him before the party sets out from her home. At all times he is treated with great respect, especially by the younger members of the community. A marriage party always pays its respects first at his house, and at festivals, when the young men go dancing through the village street, they start outside the headman's house.

In all matters involving the members of more than one village he is the acknowledged representative of his own people, whether it be the making of arrangements for a marriage or the fixing of dates for festivals and for hunts. In the settling of disputes he acquires considerable experience, being the chairman of the council in his own village and meeting with the headmen of other villages when the hunt council sits. Enjoying a position

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As the days lengthen and become warmer, other activities find their place in the routine. When the first rain has fallen the men begin to dig up the pits of rotted cow manure beside their homes, carry loads of manure to the fields, and first plough the beds where the seed rice will be sown. At the same period they carry out repairs to their houses, and the walls of new houses begin to rise. Some walls are built by constructing a screen of thin sticks on which a mud plaster is fastened, but most of the walls are built by adding a layer of wet clay to the layers which have previously dried in the sun. Timber for rafters and posts is brought from the forest, and is not always paid for. Bamboos are cut and sliced; they are needed as a foundation for the thatch. Home-made rope is prepared. Rice straw is the material commonly used for roofing.

At this time some men devote their energies to trapping and snaring. A party of men may be formed for digging out a colony of field rats which will supplement the diet. Many varieties of bird traps and snares are in use. Some have insects attached to them as bait, with birdlime to snare the birds. Others are set on the ground to catch partridge with ingenious arrangements of slip-knots and a captive bird in the centre to act as a decoy. Some of the operations call for elaborate preparation. Nets are taken down from under the rafters where they have hung since the previous year. The men seek out pools of water which may be still left in some shady hollow of the forest when most of the water has dried, for there the birds will come to drink. Traps are formed by nets, or by baskets attached by a string to where one of the men sits waiting to pull it and entrap the bird. On an April day in Barikul two parties of men set out on trapping expeditions. One of them went to a distant forest and returned with three peacocks. The other party spent the day near the banks of a nearby stream and gathered three-score birds, including doves, grey partridges, Indian drongos weaver birds and crow pheasants, all of which are eaten by the Santals.

At the same season the women find new employment. One of the commonest of the trees growing in the villages, the fields and the forests is the *mahkom* (*Bassia latifolia*, Roxb.); it has thick-petalled succulent flowers during the spring. These flowers fall from the trees during the early hours of the morning, and the women and girls rise early to collect them. They are used in a variety of ways. When dried they provide either a nutritious cattle food or a supplement for human diet. They are used in

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273 It would be a mistake to suggest that the attitude of the Santal towards intoxicants is one of simple approval. There are two standards at work. There is, on the one hand, the almost universal acceptance of the habit, reinforced by its sanction in mythology, the social function that it does fulfil and the fact that it is a form of food. There is also, on the other hand, a recognition somewhat grudgingly given to the undesirable consequences of the habit. It leads to a loss of working days, to [178] quarrels and offences against the moral code. Most informants agree that the drinking habit has increased in recent years. Such a statement must be regarded with the suspicion appropriate to all attempts to glorify the good old days. It does, however, imply the existence of a critical attitude. The earliest records, which indicate conditions a hundred years ago, all mention the drinking habits of the Santal as phenomenal. It is probable that the drinking of spirits in preference to beer has grown during the time when the Santals have been drawn more completely into a money economy, and it is certain that the Congress boycott in 1930 gave more than a temporary impetus to illicit distilling. Nevertheless, there is further evidence of [522] moral judgments being applied to drinking. The habitual [558] drunkard is a figure of fun and regarded with contempt. The drinking of rice beer does not lead to much intoxication except during festivals. A woman who drinks to excess is considered to be loose in other respects as well. People frequently complain that whereas formerly only the old men and women used to drink, now everyone does so. It would be easy, however, to overdo the picture of a Santal conscience in these matters, for they are a pleasure-loving people and drink is associated with their pleasures. The common attitude was well expressed by an old woman who had been asked to sing when she replied: "I cannot sing without beer."

221 The annual hunt takes place during the hot season. This 224 institution is still vigorous wherever there are Santals living [462] within reach of a forest. Hunting is regarded as the characteristic activity of the male. When the date of a hunt has to be [634] fixed, the responsibility for the arrangements and for making it known through the area rests with the *parganath*. The date may be fixed in different ways; each *pargana* follows its own 221 tradition. In three adjoining localities the following three 224 traditions are observed. In one the hunt is held always on the 184 seventh day of the month of *Baisakh* (April-May). In the second it is held on the day of the full moon in the same month.

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month. The date of the third is arranged while the first hunt is in progress, and it is announced by means of a *giṛa*. This is a method of reckoning dates or announcing future events. It may be used in connection with a hunt, but it is also used to announce a forthcoming marriage or a burial feast. It consists of a length of string in which a number of knots are tied, each knot representing one day. A number of *giṛa* are distributed to the surrounding villages during the weekly market, and they are kept by the headmen, who untie one of the knots each evening until one knot remains, when they know that the hunt takes place on the morrow.

Although the ritual meaning of the hunt has been obscured in the minds of the Santals, it is implicit in much that accompanies it. A hunt is the activity of the whole adult male population of the area. Women are not permitted to take part, but certain taboos must be observed by them while the men are away from home, to avert the lurking dangers of the forest. The prohibitions are similar to those enjoined on mourners and widows. No woman may wear flowers in her hair nor use the vermilion paint in the parting of her hair which is a sign of her married status. She should also leave off wearing the iron bangle which is another symbol of her marriage, and she must not bathe. At the present day, although the first two prohibitions are observed, there is some slackness about the others.

But the main responsibility for placating the possibly malevolent influences residing in the forest rests with the *dihri*, or hunt priest. This is a special office, and the name is evidently the same as the Khond *dchuri* and the Ho *dihiri*, or priest. Among the Santals the *dihri* is a priest only at the time of the hunt, and he is appointed for the *pargana*. On the morning of the day when the hunt opens he performs the sacrifice of a brown hen on the edge of the forest which will be entered, and the tribal spirits are invoked to protect the men from wild beasts. He is encouraged by the spectators, who remind him that if any of them comes to harm they will hold him responsible. At times a certain amount of mimic hunting takes place in connection with the sacrifice, during which the *dihri* plays the part of the hunted animal.

The hunt lasts through the greater part of the day. The forest is surrounded by parties from different villages and the game gradually driven towards the centre. Within living memory the stock of game in most parts of the area has declined, and some of the hunts are now poorly attended for

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that reason. Gradual deforestation and the absence of any effective protection for wild animals account for the present scarcity. Leopards, once present in great numbers, are now rare, though black bears are still relatively common. Some of the smaller kinds of Indian deer are found. It is many years since a tiger was killed in the Bankura district. Wild pigs are abundant, and so is the jungle hare, and there are many species of bird whose flesh is prized by the Santal. Every male of the tribe is an expert with the bow and arrow, and he is trained in its use from early childhood. The village parties hold together; they carry their own rations of rice and dried *mahua* cake for the night meal, and they are accompanied by their sleek and well-fed dogs. The men are dressed in loin-cloths, but they wear turbans roughly wrapped round their heads for protection against the heat of the sun. Some of the younger boys carry drums instead of weapons. The drums are used to swell the noise in the forest as the animals are driven closer towards the centre and to signal a kill, but they are also needed for the dancing that will follow. The flesh of the animals is distributed according to a regular code, though the rules are passing from use and now it is usual for the stronger of two parties to take the flesh of a kill when it is in dispute. The man who draws first blood receives the *madol*, consisting of one hind-leg, a part of which he must give to the headman of his village. If the man who first touches the animal belongs to a different village, he receives a shoulder; if it has been slain by yet another person than the one who drew first blood, the slayer receives five ribs, one fore-leg and the liver. The *dihri* receives the neck, and the remainder of the flesh goes to the co-villagers of the man who wounded the animal and not of the man who killed it. When the meat is distributed among the villagers, those who carry drums receive a double portion, and some of the meat is given to the dogs.

By evening several hundred men gather in the place where they are to spend the night. Camp fires are lit near some watercourse, and the moon rises slowly over the graceful palms that fringe the water and the belt of *sarjom* trees beyond. For some it is a night of hard work, for others it is a night of revelry. The elders from all the villages are gathered together for this one night during the year and form the supreme council of the tribe. The disputes which have baffled their several efforts in the course of the year are brought forward. Complaints involving members of more than one village are voiced and range

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over a wide field, involving inheritance, marriages and instances of indiscipline. Members are allowed to appeal against decisions made in village councils. Punishments inflicted range from outcasting to fines, and cruel punishments are sometimes exacted on the spot, as in a case of a youth who had transgressed the rules of behaviour towards a woman relative with whom he was not in a joking relationship. He was compelled to drag his nose along a line of urine provided by the village headman whose authority had been flouted. The hearing of cases continues till the small hours of the morning and the discussions appear interminable, with accusation and counter-accusation, the calling of witnesses and references to tribal law and custom. It is, however, one of the great educating and cementing institutions in the life of the tribe. It is known to them by the name of "high court", a name that has been naturalized in most Indian languages. It is also called the *sendra dugup'*, the hunt sitting, and the *la bir dugup'*, the burnt forest sitting, the latter name being due to the fact that the hunt takes place when the undergrowth in the forest has been burnt to help the fertilizing of the soil.

Meanwhile, when the evening meal is over the young men gather in another part of the clearing and spend the night in revelry. There is much strong liquor in evidence. In some cases the place of meeting has become the site of a government liquor shop. The dances, of a class known as *dongej*, are men's dances, and the songs, known as *bir*, or forest songs, are men's songs. They are frankly coarse and deal largely with the physical aspects of love, courtship and lust. Many of the songs that are sung on this night are never sung by the Santals in any mixed company, or, indeed, at any other time, a fact that indicates among them a standard of delicacy in sexual behaviour which certain modern schools of thought appear at times to deny to primitive people.

Towards morning some of the folk, young and old, rest for an hour or two of much-needed sleep, but when the sun has risen they take some breakfast and begin to disperse. They make their way to their own villages, hunting as they go; but on this second day the proceedings are apt to be unexciting, for they do not find much to kill. By late afternoon the men are home again with their spoils, and when these have been divided they work off their fatigue in sleep.

The supposed monotony of the struggle for a livelihood is broken by so many devices of nature and of man that it is

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CHAPTER 4

DANCING, MUSIC AND POETRY

THE word *raska*, meaning "pleasure", is often on the lips of the Santals, and it is dear to their hearts. They turn from their difficulties and sorrows to find solace in one or other of the many ways in which they can experience *raska*. Among these dancing is one of the most important. Their word for dancing is the same as that used for the play of children—*enee*—and dancing is indeed the play of the tribe. In every village there is a dancing floor, an open space that is well cared for. At festival times it is swept and freshly plastered with cowdung by young unmarried girls, and when it is not in use for dancing it is the place where the young men gather in the evenings to discuss their affairs and interests.

Some of the dances are connected with particular festivals, and they are performed only at those times or during the whole of the month in which the festival takes place. There are other dances that are suitable at any time during the year. Some are dances for women alone and others for men alone, while in a few both men and women dance. The chief element of variety is introduced by means of varying the rhythm; to the casual observer most of the dances look the same. A group of men or of women dance together, forming a line with their arms linked, stepping sideways or forward and then backward, keeping time to the beating accompaniment of the drums, moving either in a circle or from one side of the dancing floor to the other, and from time to time breaking out into song. Whenever there is an occasion for rejoicing there will be dancing. It is much in evidence during the celebrations and ceremonies after the birth of a child or at his fuller reception into the tribe, and again during marriage festivities. The general type of dance on all these occasions is known as *don*, which has within it many variations. At these times it is the women who do the dancing, while the men furnish an accompaniment with drums and flutes, and many of the songs refer directly to the purpose for which the folk have gathered together. During marriage ceremonies the *bapla*, or type of dance specifically associated with marriages, is also in evidence. The *donger* is the dance of the men on the night of the annual hunt. It is a wild type of dance, when there is much leaping in the air. Two of the young men stripped of clothing dance about in front of the lines, and the

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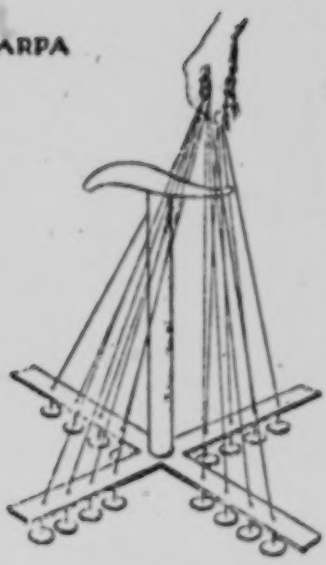

dances are preceded and ended by the shouting of obscene words. The Spring and the Harvest festivals possess their own cycle of songs and dances. During the latter the women make use of a musical instrument known as the *sarpa*, which is brought out only at this time. It is a percussion instrument that consists of a vertical pole about fifteen inches high fixed into two crossed horizontal pieces of wood. Holes are bored in the foot-long horizontal pieces, and through these holes pass lengths of string to the end of which are attached small circular wooden clappers. With the handle at the top of the vertical pole in the left hand and the upper end of the strings held in the right hand, the clappers can be drawn up sharply against the wooden bars, so producing a ringing sound. The workmanship of the *sarpas* varies; some are plain, while others display a handle carved in the shape of a dove and geometrical designs on the horizontal bars. The dancers form two lines; the older women form a line in front and sing and dance with their arms linked. Behind them comes a line of younger women, some of them beating the *sarpas*, some with small brass cymbals, while the two women at the ends of the line wave the end of their *saris* to fan the others.

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The *buai*[1] is a musical instrument associated particularly with the month that precedes that in which the Harvest festival is celebrated. This is the month known as *Dāsāī*, from the Hindi word *dasserah*. The *buai* belongs to a type of musical instrument with a wide distribution in different parts of the world. Its prototype existed when men first plucked the strings of their bows in order to hear a pleasing sound. To the arc of the bow a large hollow gourd is attached, and this adds resonance to the sound of the plucked bow string. The gourd is

[1] See illustration opposite.